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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000171

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DEPT. FOR NEA/ARP, G/TIP AND DRL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#) [ELAB](#) [KWMN](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS & LABOR AND JUSTICE ON TIP

REF: 07 KUWAIT 1489

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, Alan G. Misenheimer, for reasons 1.4 (b)

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: CDA met with Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL)/MOJ Minister Shihab on February 10 to discuss the GOK efforts to combat Trafficking in Persons. CDA reviewed the necessary steps needed to avoid a Tier 3 ranking as well as recent anti-TIP action taken by other Gulf countries in recent months. Although the Minister reiterated official Kuwaiti commitment to the issue, no tangible progress has been made since the temporary domestic workers shelter opened in September 2007. The GOK is in the process of establishing a comprehensive human rights committee that will be headed by the Minister of Justice. His concern about TIP appeared to be measured against potential criticism by MPs for being forward leaning on this sensitive issue. Shortly after the meeting, the Minister issued a press release that put a positive spin on GOK efforts to combat TIP which demonstrated his additional concern with keeping up appearances. Post will continue to press for progress on promised actions. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) On February 10, CDA met with Minister of Social Affairs & Labor and Minister of Justice, Jamal Ahmed Shihab, to discuss the GOK's anti-TIP efforts. Also present at the meeting were key officials from both ministries, including Zakaria Al-Ansari, Director of the International Relations Department and point person for TIP issues in the MOJ, and Jamal Al-Dosari, Assistant U/S for Legal Affairs in the MOSAL and Director of the temporary domestic workers shelter. The Minister told CDA that his ministries took anti-TIP efforts seriously and that the Embassy would receive full cooperation.

PROMISED STEPS

¶13. (C) CDA reviewed the necessary steps that the GOK must take to demonstrate progress in combating trafficking and avoid a Tier 3 ranking. Specifically he highlighted the need for statistical data, passage of anti-trafficking legislation, the establishment of a permanent shelter and specific anti-trafficking training for law enforcement. CDA also stressed that recent TIP measures taken by the governments of Bahrain, Oman and UAE had made the relative lack of concrete action in Kuwait appear especially negative by comparison.

¶14. (C) A status review of promised GOK actions yielded emphatic reiterations of official commitment, but little concrete progress.

-- PERMANENT SHELTER: According to Jamal Al-Dosari, bids for a location for the permanent shelter remain open to the

public (NOTE: Bids have been open since November 2007. END NOTE). He also mentioned that local NGO, Zakat House, made a large donation for repatriations of domestic laborers without means to purchase plane tickets.

-- TRAINING: Zakaria Al-Ansari briefly mentioned that the MOJ was in talks with The Protection Project at Johns Hopkins University to conduct anti-TIP training for prosecutors and judges.

-- LEGISLATION: Minister Shihab stated that the MOJ has "worked hard" on anti-TIP legislation, but blamed Parliament for continued delays in passing new laws.

-- STATISTICS: The Minister also promised to provide statistics on enforcement measures, including prosecutions, in the TIP area.

¶15. (C) Zakaria Al-Ansari discussed the recent dissolution of the Committee to Review and Respond to Human Rights reports and said that the GOK is in the process of establishing a comprehensive Human Rights Committee that will not only review and respond to human rights reports written about Kuwait, but will be able to investigate and take necessary action against human rights abuses. The committee will have representatives from various ministries including foreign affairs, interior, social affairs and labor, and, at the request of the Parliament, will be headed by the Minister of Justice. Al-Ansari indicated that the committee should be functional by next month.

PRESS COVERAGE OF THE MEETING

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¶16. (U) Shortly after the meeting with CDA, the Minister issued a statement to the press which received widespread positive coverage in the daily newspapers on February 11. According to the Minister, "the American side praised the positive steps taken by the State of Kuwait in the area of trafficking in human beings."

COMMENT

¶17. (C) Since the September 2007 opening of the temporary domestic workers shelter (reftel), there has been no tangible progress to report related to trafficking. Overall, Minister Shihab seems to be well informed about TIP and appears genuinely interested in coordinating the disparate assets of his two ministries to achieve progress. Nevertheless, he demonstrated as much concern about potential criticism by MPs who "take a very different view of the issue", i.e. who do not view the provision of enhanced protections to foreign workers as a national priority -- as in fulfilling the promises made during Ambassador Lagon's September 2007 visit (reftel). His extremely selective statement to the press regarding their meeting reflects this concern with appearances. Shihab is capable of resolute action, however, and post will continue pressing hard for progress on the promised actions. END COMMENT.

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